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SUBJECT: FORMER USPACOM COMMANDER KEATING'S OFFICE CALL
WITH PRESIDENT MA YING-JEOU

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: President Ma and Admiral (Retired) Keating discussed cross-strait relations, confidence building measures, US-Taiwan relations, PRC military development, and arms sales during a December 15 meeting. Improved cross-Strait ties bolstered regional security, Ma said, but needed to be balanced with improvements in Taiwan's relationship with the United States. In that respect, the President said, continued U.S. arms sales were particularly important. Although economics were his priority in cross-Strait discussions, PRC military activities might require him to engage the PRC on political topics as well, Ma said. Both Keating and Ma stressed the importance of good U.S.-Taiwan relations. End Summary.

Cross-Strait Relations

¶12. (SBU) During a December 15 meeting with ADM(R) Keating, Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou outlined his effort to reach a consensus with Beijing on the need to reduce tension in the Taiwan Strait and improve regional security. Ma noted that, four days after the March 2008 Taiwan presidential election, PRC President Hu Jintao told then-U.S. President Bush that he could accept "one China, different interpretations" (the 1992 Consensus) as a basis for cross-Strait discussions. This, Ma said, gave both sides the flexibility to make progress on practical matters. There was mainstream consensus on Taiwan, Ma emphasized, on the need to maintain the status quo and on the sense that a Taiwan identity did not mean an independent Taiwan. Taiwan had no need to declare independence, Ma stressed. The Republic of China had been a sovereign state for 98 years and would not declare independence again. ADM(R) Keating commended President Ma for his efforts to decrease cross-Strait tension and improve stability in the Pacific region and noted these efforts had had profound and measurable effects.

¶13. (SBU) Ma noted that the Mutual Judicial Assistance Agreement stood out amongst the nine agreements recently signed between Taiwan and the PRC. Since the signing of this agreement, he said, PRC authorities had made over 3,000 requests for repatriation of criminals who have committed crimes on the mainland.

¶14. (SBU) In 2009, more than 700,000 PRC tourists visited Taiwan, Ma said, and the number of PRC tourists was expected to surpass that for Japan in 2010. Ma expressed the hope that Beijing would allow individual tourist to travel to Taiwan in the future, since the current policy only allowed visits in tour groups. Individual tourist travels would allow more time for travelers to gain a deeper understanding of Taiwan, Ma reasoned. A large number of PRC students would also attend universities in Taiwan next year, Ma noted,

commenting that these students would bring back different perspectives to the mainland and affect future developments there.

Cross-Strait Confidence Building Measures

15. (SBU) Despite warming economic ties, Ma said, the PRC military posture across the Strait remained unchanged. PLA activities in recent months demonstrated that Taiwan may need to move beyond economic discussions into political discussions with the mainland. However, Ma noted, Taiwan had told Beijing it needed to remove the missiles across the Strait before any such military or security issues could be discussed.

U.S.-Taiwan Relations

16. (SBU) Ma stressed that Taiwan would maintain good relations with the United States and asked for U.S. support as he worked to reach a peace agreement with the PRC. Keating assured President Ma that U.S. policy called for a credible defense for Taiwan and supported democracy, human rights, and economic progress. On all of these, he noted, Taiwan was a beacon of light in the Asia Pacific region. Keating noted the importance of giving senior U.S. officials the benefit of first-hand impressions of Taiwan's situation.

PRC Military Development

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17. (SBU) Increasingly, Ma commented, Taiwan needed to rely on its own defense efforts, given the PRC's growing power and the difficulty of gaining outside support. Consequently, he said, Taiwan's defense relied on both military means and soft power. Because Taiwan could not afford to enter into an arms race with the PRC, it needed to have a viable defense with an effective deterrence. Taiwan's defense force should be "Superb, Strong, and Smart," the President said.

18. (SBU) ADM(R) Keating said the U.S. had observed PRC military improvement in both capabilities and capacities. PRC computer network attacks, space developments, expanding reach of PRC submarines, and advanced PRC electronic warfare capabilities had given the United States cause to question the PRC's true intentions. The U.S. would like China to be more transparent and candid about its intentions. Every day, through the combined efforts of responsible nations in the region, Keating said, the PRC received the message that it should not consider the use of force.

U.S. Arms Sales

19. (SBU) President Ma told ADM(R) Keating that he understood the U.S. would announce further arms sales to Taiwan in the next couple of months. U.S. arms sales were very important to Taiwan, Ma said, noting that he hoped the U.S. would support procurement of submarines to replace the Taiwan Navy's four aging submarines, of which two were over 60 years old. Taiwan's opposition party had accused him of selling out Taiwan by pursuing ECFA negotiations, Ma said. There were pitfalls of having a closer relationship with an authoritarian PRC, the President admitted, but a visible sign of U.S. support would allow him to rebut the opposition's charges.

Participants

110. (U) Other Taiwan attendees included National Security Council Secretary General Dr. Su Chi, Minister of National Defense Kao Hua-chu, Chief of General Staff, ADM Lin Jan-yi

Executive Deputy of the Deputy Chief of General Staff for Intelligence, MG Jing Yen-yuan. Other U.S. attendees included the Director, Mrs. Wandalee Keating, COL Tony Chow, Chief of LAS Section, Mr. Tony Hu, Deputy Chief of TECH Section, and LTC Roger Cavazos, Taiwan Desk Officer, USPACOM J51.

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